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Amy Carter Acquitted in Protest

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NORTHAMPTON, Mass., April 15 — Amy Carter, Abbie Hoffman and 13 other protesters were acquitted today of trespassing and disorderly conduct in a demonstration against the Central Intelligence Agency last November.

The defendants had argued that crimes by the agency justified their actions at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Describing their elaborate defense arguments in the case as an effort to "put the C.I.A. on trial," the protesters brought in 11 witnesses, many of them prominent left-wing political figures, to testify about purported C.I.A. misconduct.

After defense lawyers and prosecutors completed their summations this afternoon, Judge Richard F. Connon instructed the six-member jury in a manner that gave the defense team virtually everything it wanted. He allowed the jury to consider the testimony of the witnesses on the C.I.A. He described the "necessity defense," a tenet of Massachusetts case law that exonerates people who commit crimes if they reasonably believe that their actions will prevent other crimes that pose the "clear and immediate threat" of greater harm.

It was not clear whether the jurors had agreed after nearly three hours of deliberation that the defendants' actions were justified by actions of the

C.I.A. or whether they simply decided that the disorderly conduct and trespassing laws were inapplicable.

But the Hampshire County District Attorney, W. Michael Ryan Jr., said he believed the verdict demonstrated a distaste among citizens for the activities of the C.I.A.

"If there is a message, it was that this jury was composed of middle America," Mr. Ryan said. "It was a great jury for us. They weren't kids. There were a couple of senior citizens. And they believed the defense. Middle America doesn't want the C.I.A. doing what they are doing."

The C.I.A. said no spokesman was immediately available for comment today.

Charges Were Misdemeanors

The protest that led to the arrests was touched off by the presence of a recruiter for the C.I.A. on the University of Massachusetts campus. Twelve of the defendants, including Mr. Hoffman, who has been active in radical causes for more than 20 years, were charged with trespassing after they occupied an administration building on Nov. 24. Three others, including Miss Carter, a 19-year-old sophomore at Brown University, were charged with disorderly conduct after they sat down in the road to block the buses that were carrying away those arrested in the building. Both charges were misdemeanors.

The defense witnesses included Edgar Chamorro, a former leader of the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary movement; Ralph McGehee, who as a C.I.A. agent was the chief adviser to the secret police in South Vietnam in the war there; Daniel Ellsberg, the former National Security Council aide who said here that he been moved to make public the Pentagon Papers by the acts of war resisters, and Ramsey Clark, United States Attorney General under President Johnson.

They described assassinations, murders, campaigns of misinformation and other alleged activities by the agency and groups it supports in Central America and elsewhere. Mr. Clark testified that the agency "seems uninhibited by law," and others testified that action by Congress or the courts was futile.

C.I.A. Testimony Called Irrelevant

The defense, led by Leonard I. Weinglass, a lawyer who has specialized in political cases since the celebrated conspiracy trial of eight protestors at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, maintained that neither the trespassing statute, which applies to people who occupy property "without right," nor the disorderly conduct statute, which covers conduct without "legitimate purpose," should apply in this case.

The prosecutor who argued the case, Diane Fernald, had asked the jury to ignore the testimony about the C.I.A. "We're talking about crimes that were committed in Amherst, Mass., just down the road, in Hampshire County," she said in her closing argument today. "We're not talking about illegal activi-

ties of the C.I.A. in Central America or elsewhere."

She added: "It may be that these defendants acted to sway public opinion. That does not justify their behavior."

After the verdict was announced, the defendants appeared on the steps of the Romanesque granite courthouse here in red T-shirts showing a gavel smashing the letters C.I.A. in the slogan "Put the C.I.A. on Trial." Hundreds of supporters chanted "C.I.A., go away," and "Langley, Langley," an allusion to a demonstration planned for Washington on April 25, and for an "action" at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Va., on April 27.

"Everyone out there should be at Langley," said Miss Carter, the daughter of former President Jimmy Carter, one of several defendants to address the crowd through a megaphone. "Tell your parents to come," she said, smiling.

Miss Carter said on Monday, when the last witnesses testified, that she spoke to her parents by telephone over the weekend, and that they said they were proud of her.

Mr. Hoffman, who told the jury that at 50 years old he was the oldest of the defendants, said today from the steps, "It isn't the end; it's just the beginning."